United Nations ST/AI/1999/9

Secretariat

21 September 1999

Administrative instruction

Special measures for the achievement of gender equality*

The Under-Secretary-General for Management, pursuant to section 4.2 of ST/SGB/1997/1, and in accordance with the mandate of Articles 8 and 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's policy, as stated in the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/282, promulgates the following:

Section 1
Special measures for the filling of posts at the Professional level and above

Goal

1.1 The goal as set by the General Assembly is to achieve a 50/50 gender distribution by 2000 in all posts in the Professional category and above, overall and at each level, including posts at the D-1 level and above. This goal applies throughout the Organization, and in every department, office or regional commission, overall and at each level. It applies not only to posts subject to geographical distribution but to all categories of posts, irrespective of the type or duration of the appointment (permanent, fixed-term, limited duration, indefinite, mission and mission replacement, less than one year), the series of the Staff Rules under which the appointment is to be given (100, 200, or 300 series) or the source of funding.

Scope

1.2 The special measures contained in this section shall apply throughout the Secretariat for the filling of all vacant posts in the Professional category and above. The special measures shall apply at all times, including during periods of retrenchment, when a recruitment freeze is in effect or when a department or office is reorganized.

Vacancy announcements

1.3 Vacancies for all posts at the P-5 level and above (other than P-5 language posts) in departments and offices shall be advertised internally and externally. Vacancies for P-4 posts shall first be circulated internally, except when a waiver has been approved by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) in cases of posts with specialized technical requirements, which cannot be met from within the Organization. Recruitment for posts at the P-3 and P-2 levels is governed by administrative instruction ST/AI/1997/7.

Eligibility to apply for internal vacancies

1.4 In order to increase the pool of eligible women candidates, women staff members holding a current appointment of any type at the P-3/L-3 or P-4/L-4 levels who have been in the service of the Organization for a cumulative period of at least one year accrued over the two years immediately preceding application for a vacancy shall be eligible to apply for vacancies at the P-4 level that have been circulated internally. The same shall apply to women serving with the United Nations funds and programmes, any specialized agency or the common system.

Identification of potential women candidates

1.5 As soon as a vacancy announcement is issued, OHRM or the local personnel office shall assist all departments and offices, especially those falling short of the goal set in section 1.1, in identifying qualified women candidates for the post. This should be done at least six months before the

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post falls vacant in cases of foreseeable vacancies, for example, retirements and posts proposed for establishment in the programme budget. For that purpose, OHRM or the local personnel office shall review potential women candidates within and outside the department or office concerned, including those serving in regional commissions or on mission appointment, as well as those who meet the minimum requisite seniority under section 1.6 of the present instruction. Where necessary, and especially for vacancies identified in the succession plan of the department or office, OHRM shall also seek women candidates outside the Organization for external vacancies, including through advertisements and special searches.

Cumulative seniority for promotion

1.6 In order to increase the number of women considered for promotion, the guidelines on normal seniority shall be flexibly applied so that the cumulative seniority of a female staff member is considered for purposes of regular and accelerated promotions. Cumulative seniority shall be taken into account when considering women candidates for promotion, except when it would adversely affect their situation. Cumulative seniority shall be calculated as the average of the years of the staff member accrued in her present Professional grade and in her immediately preceding Professional grade.

Accelerated promotions

1.7 Until such time as the goal of gender equality in the Professional category and above is met, overall and at each level, recommendations for accelerated promotion of staff shall be considered more favourably when a woman has been recommended in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1.8 (a) of the present instruction. This measure shall not bar the accelerated promotion of a male candidate who is determined to be the clearly superior candidate for a specific post.

Selection/appointment

1.8 (a) Vacancies in the Professional category and above shall be filled, when there are one or more women candidates, by one of those candidates provided that:

(i) Her qualifications meet the requirements for the vacant post;

(ii) Her qualifications are substantially equal or superior to those of competing male candidates;

(b) In accordance with staff regulation 4.4, the fullest regard shall be given to the qualifications and experience of women already in the service of the United Nations;

(c) In evaluating women candidates, particular emphasis shall be given to potential to perform at the higher level, although women may not have been offered such an opportunity in their prior service;

(d) When the qualifications of one or more women candidates match the requirements for the vacant post and the department or office recommends a male candidate, the department or office shall submit to the appointment and promotion bodies a written analysis, with appropriate supporting documentation, indicating how the qualifications and experience of the recommended candidate, when compared to the core requirements of the post, are clearly superior to those of the female candidates who were not recommended;

(e) The principles in subparagraphs (a) through (c) above shall apply equally to all appointments that are not subject to review by the appointment and promotion bodies, whether the appointment is made under the 100, 200 or 300 series of the Staff Rules;

(f) The appointment of all external candidates, including those eligible to apply for an internal vacancy announcement under section 1.4 of the present instruction, shall be subject to established recruitment criteria as to qualifications and experience and to the applicable requirements of equitable geographical distribution. Every effort shall be made to increase the number of women from developing countries, in particular those which are unrepresented or under-represented or from countries that have a low representation of women, including countries with economies in transition. If any candidate is to be recruited over the normal maximum desirable range for a given country, such exceptional cases shall be considered more favourably when a woman has been recommended in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1.8 (a) of the present instruction.

1.9 The provisions of sections 1.6 and 1.8 shall apply to the selection of staff for posts in all categories where women are under-represented.

Section 2
Temporary assignments

2.1 The measures set out in this section shall apply to temporary assignments in the Professional category and above and in the General Service and related categories, as well as to temporary assignments of General Service staff

members to posts in the Professional category. Temporary assignments shall be duly reflected in the performance appraisal of the staff member concerned.

Temporary assignment to a higher-level post

2.2 (a) When there is a need to assign a staff member temporarily to a post, either to replace an incumbent who is expected to be absent for a period of three months or longer, or pending completion of the procedures for filling an unencumbered vacant post when it is anticipated that completion of those procedures will require three months or longer, the department or office concerned shall inform its staff of the temporary vacancy and give them the opportunity to notify the executive or local personnel office of their interest in being considered. Subsequently, the department or office concerned shall review all their eligible staff for temporary assignment leading to the assumption of the responsibilities of the higher-level post, with consequent designation as officer-in-charge and/or grant of a special post allowance when the requisite conditions are met;

(b) When selecting a candidate for temporary assignment, due regard shall be given to the need to broaden career development opportunities for women. When there are one or more women candidates, the temporary assignment shall be filled by one of those candidates, provided that:

(i) Her qualifications meet the requirements for the vacant post;

(ii) Her qualifications are substantially equal or superior to those of competing male candidates;

(c) Before the head of the department or office temporarily assigns a staff member to a higher-level post under the provisions set out in this section, he or she shall document the manner in which eligible women staff members have been reviewed.

Mission service

2.3 All departments and offices concerned with the selection of mission staff shall ensure that women applicants for mission service are reviewed and selected in accordance with the requirements of section 1.8 (e) of the present instruction. At the time of creation of a new mission, or when existing missions are expanded, the department concerned shall announce its staffing requirements electronically. Particular regard shall be paid to women candidates when selecting staff in those occupations or functional areas where women are under-represented. Women in the Professional category and above and those in the General Service and related categories are encouraged to inform the departments concerned of their interest in mission service.

Section 3
Increased awareness of gender issues

Gender training

3.1 (a) To foster better understanding between men and women, to develop and maintain a gender-sensitive environment, to ensure compliance with these special measures and to eliminate obstacles to the advancement of women within the Organization, OHRM shall expand existing training opportunities and institute new training programmes. These initiatives shall be designed to change the organizational culture and to enhance awareness of and ability to better address issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment. They shall explain the principle of gender equality mandated by Article 8 of the Charter and explain the tools that exist to achieve this goal, including the provisions under the present instruction and other relevant rules, in particular those regarding accountability;

(b) Gender training shall be designed to develop greater awareness of assumptions and perceptions regarding gender balance and a gender-sensitive work environment and to assist departments and offices in identifying areas for improvement and developing ways to provide a more supportive work environment for women and men;

(c) Additional training for senior officials, middle-level managers and staff concerned shall be provided to address the need of the Organization to mainstream a gender perspective in departmental work programmes and reporting mechanisms, emphasizing strategies to incorporate a gender perspective in all aspects of the substantive work of the Organization;

(d) OHRM shall instruct staff members responsible for the implementation of the special measures at all duty stations, including but not limited to executive and personnel officers, members of appointment and promotion bodies and departmental panels on placement and promotion, on compliance with the present instruction.

3.2 Appropriate gender training shall be incorporated into the curricula of induction and orientation courses, senior management, people management, supervisory training and conflict resolution courses, mission readiness and peacekeeping management training, administration, human resources and other appropriate staff development programmes. Compulsory training courses specific to gender

sensitivity and programmes on mainstreaming a gender perspective shall be instituted by OHRM for all staff.

3.3 Department heads, programme managers and executive offices shall exercise leadership in facilitating training and career development to ensure equal opportunities for women in the Professional category and above and in the General Service and related categories, including opportunities for managed rotation between posts and assignments, movement within and between occupations and the acquisition of skills in fields of work or assignments traditionally segregated along gender lines.

Section 4
Implementation and monitoring

Responsibilities of heads of departments and offices

4.1 Heads of departments and offices shall have primary responsibility and shall be accountable for the implementation of the special measures set out in the present instruction, including during periods of retrenchment, when a recruitment freeze is in effect or when a department or office is reorganized. They shall prepare and submit a department action plan for achievement of the goals set in section 1.1 of the present instruction, including a succession plan, which will be fully synchronized with the revised human resources planning cycle, and shall submit reports on the progress achieved under the plan to the Secretary-General through OHRM and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

4.2 All recommendations presented to the appointment and promotion bodies for recruitment, promotion or interdepartmental lateral transfer shall be accompanied by an explanation of how the recommended action will affect the representation of women in the department or office concerned, both at the level of the post to be filled and overall for posts in the Professional category and above.

4.3 Each department or office shall prepare statistics every six months showing the current distribution of women and men by category of posts at each level, regardless of the source of funding or appointment authority for the post. OHRM shall provide forms for this purpose. Reports prepared in this fashion shall be promptly submitted to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, who shall bring any failure to submit these reports to the attention of the Secretary-General. Heads of departments and offices shall be responsible for providing any additional information or clarification required by OHRM or the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

4.4 (a) Executive and administrative offices, or personnel offices at offices away from Headquarters, shall provide the focal points for women in their respective department or office with all information necessary to the discharge of their functions, including notices of upcoming vacancies and temporary vacancies, as well as gender distribution statistics and other data as required.

(b) Heads of departments and offices shall ensure that departmental focal points participate in an ex officio capacity in the panel advising on appointments, promotions and special post allowances in the department or office concerned. At offices away from Headquarters where the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women cannot be represented on the local appointment and promotion body, they shall also ensure that one of the departmental focal points for women is invited to participate in the local Appointment and Promotion Committee as an ex officio member, and that his or her views are reflected in the report. The departmental focal point for women who attend the departmental panel shall not attend the local Appointment and Promotion Committee when it considers cases which have already been reviewed by the departmental focal point as an ex officio member of the departmental panel.

Responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources Management

4.5 OHRM shall be responsible for monitoring the application of the measures contained in the present instruction and, through its ex officio representative in the appointment and promotion bodies, shall monitor compliance with those measures in individual cases.

4.6 OHRM shall be responsible for the implementation of all training programmes and related initiatives described in section 3 of the present instruction.

4.7 OHRM shall maintain an inventory of posts and staff by gender, nationality, occupation, level, department or office and duty station, based on the quarterly departmental summaries and IMIS data, and shall include in its regular statistical summaries an analysis of data relating to the number and percentage of women by nationality. All placement and promotion circulars shall include data showing the impact of new appointments, placements and promotions on gender distribution at the levels concerned and overall in each of the departments or offices concerned.

4.8 For the purpose of assisting departments and offices in identifying women candidates for available vacancies in accordance with section 1.4, OHRM shall develop and maintain a skills database of all staff members by occupational groups, including for General Service and related categories, which shall reflect all relevant data, including, but not limited to, gender, nationality, educational qualifications and areas of special knowledge or experience, technical and language skills, years of work experience and positions held. It shall also maintain a roster of external candidates including the same data.

4.9 OHRM shall monitor the representation of women by occupation and shall identify and develop recruitment sources to expand the pool of women candidates for posts in occupations in which women are under-represented. In consultation with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, OHRM shall establish occupational targets for the recruitment, placement and promotion of women when required.

4.10 OHRM shall make an independent analysis of the data submitted by departments and offices in accordance with section 4.3 of the present instruction. The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management shall transmit the analysis to the Secretary-General, together with appropriate information on the manner in which OHRM has discharged its own responsibilities under the present instruction, with appropriate conclusions and recommendations. He or she shall ensure that all relevant information is included in the annual report to the General Assembly on the composition of the Secretariat and is made available to the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat and the departmental focal points for women.

Monitoring by other officials or bodies

4.11 A representative of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women shall participate in an ex officio capacity on the Appointment and Promotion Board and the Appointment and Promotion Committee and, where appropriate, in accordance with paragraph 1.9 of the present instruction, on the Appointment and Promotion Panel.

4.12 The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Steering Committee for the Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat, the Focal Point for Women in the Secretariat and the departmental focal points for women shall monitor the implementation of the present instruction by departments and OHRM, in accordance with their respective terms of reference.

Section 5
Final provisions

5.1 The present instruction shall enter into force on 1 October 1999.

5.2 Administrative instruction ST/AI/412 of 5 January 1996 is hereby abolished.

(*Signed*) Joseph E. **Connor**
Under-Secretary-General for Management